

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 14-15

AVIATION WEEK & SPACE TECHNOLOGY
28 January 1980

Budget Cuts Aircraft Purchases

Air Force, Navy tactical procurement reduced or slowed;
Navy's allocation insufficient to cover normal attrition

Washington—Fiscal 1981 Defense Dept. budget request that Congress will begin examining this week reduces or slows procurement of U. S. tactical aircraft for both the Navy and Air Force.

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Because of the pressure put on the Carter Administration by Congress to increase the Defense Dept. budget in Fiscal 1981 by 5% in exchange for possible Senate ratification of the SALT 2 treaty, the new budget reflects increases in the area of strategic weapons, especially funding for continued full-scale development of the MX advanced ICBM.

It also reflects big increases in development of USAF satellite systems to aid in U. S. verification of Soviet strategic weapons, another concern articulated in the SALT ratification process.

Between \$1 billion and \$2 billion will be earmarked in Fiscal 1981 for the development of new reconnaissance/surveillance spacecraft and U. S. antisatellite capability. The funding for these programs—euphemistically referred to as “national technical means”—is hidden in a variety of USAF budget line items covered in technology programs. Optical and electronic intelligence systems will be included in new space-based systems, but emphasis is being placed on putting into orbit a high-resolution radar sensor (AW&ST June 4, 1979, p. 11), a technology the U. S. has developed.

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